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By PATRICK MEIGHAN

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NASHUA – Charlie Bass made his way through the Nashua Senior Activity Center, chatting up volunteers and members who prepared meals, painted in art class or ducked out of a bridge game to shake the congressman's hand.

Joe Goodman, 85, made it a point to have a private moment Thursday morning with Bass, the 2nd District Republican seeking re-election in November. Bass is facing a rematch with Concord Democrat Ann McLane Kuster.

"There's a lot I can bend his ear about," said Goodman, who chairs the senior center's board of directors, after talking with Bass.

Goodman worries about numbers. Greater Nashua has 17,000 seniors, but the Temple Street center has only 2,000 members. The center needs to reach out to the rest, but there's no money in the budget for that, Goodman said.

Also, only one part of the senior center population is represented at the activity center, Goodman worries.

"Look around here and what do you see? I'll tell you what you see – white faces," Goodman said.

"We need to get a bilingual person (on staff), and we can't afford to have one."

The center runs on a shoestring budget of under \$400,000, which pays to maintain and provide utilities for the two-story building. The budget also pays the salaries of three full-time staff members, Goodman said.

Ninety percent of the work done at the center – preparing meals, packing lunches, etc. – is done by volunteers, Goodman said.

"If it wasn't for volunteers, we probably wouldn't be here," Goodman said.

Goodman isn't critical of Bass. After all, Bass helped get federal dollars to build the center a decade ago.

But Goodman couldn't pass on the opportunity to voice a concern when a politician visits.

For his part, Bass said that's the very reason he was visiting the center.

"Elected officials are most effective when they listen," Bass said. "What I'm doing here today is I'm listening."

What Bass said he heard was a need for transportation to bring more seniors to and from the activity center.

"He comes here quite a bit," Jeanne Marcoux, the center's executive director, said of Bass. "He makes the rounds and talks to people."

U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen likewise made an impressive presentation at the center recently, Marcoux said.

"I think we benefit having the politicians come in. It's great for us," Marcoux said.

Not all seniors wanted to voice a concern. Micheline Coen wanted to praise Bass for the work he's done representing Nashua. Coen was undecided where she was politically when she came here from Quebec Province, but became a Republican and staunch supporter of former President George W. Bush. Coen obtained dual U.S. and Canadian citizenship in 2002, she said.

Bass didn't make speeches during his visit. Pausing to speak to reporters, he stressed tax reform and finding bipartisan solutions to problems.

Currently, taxes raise an amount equal to 18 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product, and through tax reform – such as simplifying the tax code and eliminating deductions – Bass said he'd like to see tax revenue raise to 20 percent of the GDP.

All of the nation's significant achievements were made when people of great principle were willing to compromise, Bass said.

"Compromise is not capitulation," Bass said.